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Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 August 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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War on drugs threatens minorities in the U.S.

According to a 2011 survey published by the "Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)" of the US-Government some 10 percent of Blacks and Latinos have used cocaine, compared with nearly 20 percent of Whites. Higher percentages of Whites have also consumed marijuana, methamphetamine and hallucinogens. But Blacks still are arrested for drug possession in the US more than three times as often as Whites. Of all drug offenders sent to state prisons, African-Americans are 62 percent despite the fact that they only represent 12 percent of the US population. More than 25 million Americans have been arrested on drug charges since 1980, about one third of them were Black.

According to official US data the number of African-Americans in US prisons is disproportionate. In Georgia for example, some 54 percent of all prisoners are Blacks despite the fact that African-Americans only represent 29 percent of the population of this US state. In Arkansas, some 52 percent of the prisoners are African-Americans, but they are only 16 percent of the inhabitants. An even more disproportionate representation of Blacks has been found in Louisiana with 76 percent of all prisoners and 33 percent of the population. In Virginia some 68 percent of all prisoners are African-Americans, but only they are 20 percent of the inhabitants of this state.

There are many reasons for the higher percentage of African-Americans imprisoned as drug offenders. Drug transactions among Blacks are easier for police to target because they more often happen in public than drug transaction between Whites. The rampant racism among police and security services is the main reason for the alarming figures of arrested black drug offenders in USA. Police profiling focusing on African-Americans as drug offenders has not contributed to a remarkable progress in the US war on drugs. The war on drugs will not become more successful by criminalizing African-Americans disproportionately. Instead it will create more inter-ethnic tensions and social unrest. An effective campaign against the abuse of drugs should include more initiatives for new social and medical facilities in order to prevent young people from taking drugs or assisting drug victims. Imprisonment will not solve the drug problem, but further enhance the drug traffic and the dependence of young African-Americans of this illegal trade. Especially in US prisons the war on drugs has failed to show any convincing results. Therefore these prisons became the most important drug trafficking markets in USA.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Human Rights Council to urge the US-Government to ensure that the war on drugs will no longer threaten ethnic minority people in a disproportionate way. The Council should especially call on US authorities to create a commission to review the impact of the war on drugs on ethnic minorities and to create more social and medical facilities in order to prevent the abuse and illicit traffic of drugs.